3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara

informant said that children are occasionally burned on the arm or leg to develop resistance to pain. I was also told that a mask, consisting of a face painted on a coconut husk, is used to frighten little children. It is also used by clownish individuals to amuse the crowd at a large ceremonial exchange.

When in the company of adults, children are unobtrusive. Watching, listening, dozing, munching a piece of breadfruit, or entertaining themselves with a piece of string or imitation cigarette, they sit silently for hours on the lap of relative. The conversation of the adults is never modified on account of the children before whom life gradually unfolds.

In these early years the foundations of fear and respect are laid. Fear of the spirits, still today the strongest emotional complex of the natives, and of the Christian devil as taught by the native missionaries, takes deep root in the mind of the child. He hears adults talking of evil spirits they have seen, heard, and been possessed by; he is told stories of spirits and bad souls by his relatives and older children, and he hears and sees them himself. These stories have a strong permanent effect on his personality. Respect for his ancestral gods and the Christian God, closely related to and conflicting with fear of spirits, develops in the child during these years and blends with his growing sense of the importance of the elders of his clan and village.

The child becomes familiar with the behavior patterns of the group, and recognizes the status of each individual in relation to himself and to the other members of the community. He learns the social sanctions, backed as they are by fear of spirit ancestors, elders, and public opinion. He becomes dependent on public opinion, but he develops no defense against rebuke. Accustomed as he has been to the affection, cooperation, leniency, and encouragement—if not from all his relatives all the time, at least from some of his relatives all the time—he is unprepared for opposition, which he meets by subterfuge, sulkiness or tantrums. This lack of self-control is

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173 Among a people who have no written records we must look to the old legends and fables and fairy stories to give us some clue to the buried secrets of the past, something to throw a light on the mysterious and vague "time when the race was young"; and snatch, before it is too late, the already rapidly slipping cable that links us with the olden time. The fairy stories of the Polynesians were always of a kindlier and brighter nature than the gloomy legends of the more "Papuan" Fiji; and in the Lau Islands (which are quite distinct from Fiji proper) the Polynesian element may be roughly divided from the Fijian by a line running from the north-east to the south-west, having Lakeba Island and all Southern Lau (Polynesian) to the east, and the Moala group and Northern Lau (Fijian) to the west. And the farther south one goes the more strongly is the Polynesian in evidence, till in the Ono group there is very little indeed to remind one of Fiji at all.

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797 It is very difficult nowadays to get the people to speak of the old times, for the simple reason that they are fast forgetting them; and even in the oldest people, old Lauan ladies and gentlemen (I use the term intentionally, for the manners of the old people are always good, and very different from those of many of their descendants), who were born about the time when the *lotu*[1] first came to

[1] Christianity.

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Lau, just eighty years ago, were strictly forbidden, perhaps wisely in those early days, to talk about anything at all connected with their old mythology. So that as children they did not hear from their mothers the old tales that even one generation before would have been so freely told to them.

However, in those islands where no resident missionary was stationed, the rule was not so strictly enforced, and it is there that I have been able to collect some of the most interesting stories.

Stories of the gods are ethnologically the most fascinating of all, especially among a totemistic people; and the Polynesians in a general sense were ancestor-worshippers, and held sacred certain beasts, birds, and fishes, wherein dwelt their gods; although they never set up special idols to them, as the Papuan race seems to have done. The value of an old legend—when established and corroborated—for purposes of ethnological investigation is immense, but on the other hand there is always the danger that an imperfect legend may lead one very much astray by setting one's feet upon a track which proves false, and only takes one farther away the more one pursues it. An amusing instance of this occurred not long ago. I was investigating the old snake legend of Vulaga Island (an island, incidentally, on which no snakes are ever found). A man told